

Margaret Smith-Hale
Executive Director

February 15, 2010

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Testimony to the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

Distinguished Committee Members:

This testimony is to ask you to reject Governor Rell's call to eliminate the Connecticut Commission on Aging.

ITN^{NorthCentralConnecticut}[™] is a community-supported nonprofit that offers "door through door" rides to seniors and adults with visual impairments in ten towns in North Central Connecticut. This alternative program is unique and uses a combination of volunteer and paid drivers who provide rides 24/7 in private vehicles. There is no restriction on the purpose of a ride, and help is offered to carry packages, fold walkers, and open doors.

The Connecticut Commission on Aging has been instrumental in bringing this program to Connecticut. In April of 2008 they took the lead and worked with three state senators to make permanent changes to the state livery laws. These changes were required to continue to use volunteers as drivers and operate without government funding.

The Connecticut Commission on Aging is an important resource for us. They utilize an extensive and diverse network of relationships across state agencies and branches of government. This is invaluable as we learn to network with other entities to provide for the transportation needs of our seniors. Many of our riders are very frail and are not able to use the services of existing public buses. We need the help of the Connecticut Commission on Aging to identify where we best fit for the services needed by our seniors.

We urge you to keep the Connecticut Commission on Aging in place to continue to be an independent resource for this growing population. In twenty short years the number of seniors will grow by 64%. We must have an independent entity to keep searching for alternative ways to bring services at the lowest cost to the taxpayers.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Margaret Smith Hale
Executive Director